



THE PHYSICIAN'S *Bookshelf*

JEWISH MEDICAL ETHICS—A Comparative and Historical Study of the Jewish Religious Attitude to Medicine and Its Practice—Rabbi Dr. Immanuel Jakobovits. Philosophical Library, Inc., 15 East 40th Street, New York, N. Y., 1959. 381 pages, \$6.00.

The author, a very talented rabbi, has done considerable, painstaking research in preparing this volume. Religion and medicine have been in alliance with each other throughout the entire course of recorded human history. This partnership of religion and medicine has not always been holy or healthy. The fields of medical ethics covered by Jewish law are wider and more numerous than the comparative material provided by the Christian and Moslem faiths. All faiths are concerned with the art of healing, the recourse to prayer and the moral responsibilities of the physician. The attitude to medicine, human healing versus Divine Providence, is discussed carefully.

Definition of dangerous diseases and concessions and restrictions for the patients are enumerated. Ethical concessions for the sick and moral considerations in the saving of human life are emphasized. Holy Writ tells us "that man is obliged to fulfill his duties toward his neighbor in the same way as he must discharge his debt to Heaven." In contrast to the jurisprudence of the Romans, Jewish law does not know of any division between legal law and moral law in its principles or administration.

A chapter discussing the dead and their treatment is described. The Talmud directs the performing of a cesarean section on a woman who died during childbirth in the hope of delivering a viable child. The Talmud does not make any references to the treatment of infectiously diseased corpses and their disposal. The first frank reference to a post mortem examination dates back to 1286, as far as the Church is concerned. On the other hand the Talmud shows "serious discussion on scientific method and the planning of an experiment in dissection of a human body." The Mishnah details the list of human bones very accurately and this could only have been obtained through a post mortem examination.

The attitude to pain in human beings and in animals is given considerable consideration. In the Jewish faith compassion both for human beings and animals is stressed. The vast subjects of Euthanasia, dissection, abortion, artificial insemination, sterilization, and therapeutic contraception are all treated in the light of eternal truth, whose authentic source is the Bible.

Prophylactic hygiene, circumcision, sexual hygiene and sexual relations and their effect on eugenics are all carefully described.

The laws dealing with the Sabbath, forbidden foods, laws of ritual slaughter, preparation of the meat and rules for all meals are analyzed.

Churchmen in all ages including the present, recoil from the idea of defeating Providence or thwarting the divine vengeance for sin. This outlook caused ecclesiastical condemnation of the pioneering efforts in plastic surgery in the sixteenth century; it induced Pope Leo XII to ban the use

of condoms against syphilis in 1836; there was opposition to Simpson's use of chloroform to ease pains of childbirth and everyone was concerned and disturbed by Ehrlich's discovery of salvarsan for the treatment of syphilis. The author brings all these points out very vividly with the necessary biography and references to substantiate each point in question. Discussion is brought out on faith cures, and the acts of healing wrought by Jesus and in the Apostolic age.

The evolution of medicine from a primitive fight against evil spirits, demons, witches and astrological omens into a rational science was a long and tedious process. Neither Egypt nor Greece, the two homes of rational medicine, had any influence on the scientific outlook of the Talmud. The Talmud retained the biblical hostility to superstition.

This book is written in a very interesting and stimulating manner. Good health today depends on far more than medical progress. I would indeed recommend this volume to be read not only by the medical profession but by laity as well.

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THE MEGALOBlastic ANEMIAS—Modern Medical Monographs 18—Victor Herbert, M.D., Research Assistant in Hematology, The Mount Sinai Hospital, New York. Grune & Stratton, Inc., 381 Fourth Avenue, New York 16, N. Y., 1959. 162 pages, \$6.00.

In this very readable little volume, the author reviews the literature and his experience with some 200 cases of megaloblastic anemia. The material is presented in terms of hematologic morphology, the clinical picture, differential diagnosis, therapy and particularly, etiologic classification on the basis of vitamin B₁₂ and/or folic acid deficiency.

He stresses the importance of oval macrocytes and the "right shift" in polymorphonuclear leukocyte lobulation as an early finding. While detection of macrocytosis in the peripheral blood or giant metamyelocytes or megaloblasts in the marrow early may be a problem, even for the hematologist, an increase in four and five lobed PMN's and the presence of six lobed PMN's should be picked up by most technicians. In the absence of folic acid administration, he noted no neuropathy of B₁₂ deficiency without a "right shift" or macroovalocytes.

In regard to the treatment of pernicious anemia, admitting that up to 98 per cent of 1,000 microgram doses of B₁₂ are excreted in the urine, he presents little evidence to support his recommendation of these 1,000 microgram injections of B₁₂ for initial and maintenance therapy.

The photomicrographs are poor but no worse than any other attempt to picture a megaloblastic marrow. Typographical errors are lacking, but one wonders about "Asiatic Type" spinal cord change (page 71). The material is clearly, critically and concisely presented. Subject matter is arranged for easy reference, and the index is good. The bibliography is extensive, over 600 references, and up to date (1959). It is highly recommended.